

Wheels Within Wheels: Slavery and the Framework of the Social History of Eighteenth Century Georgia

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In the last few years, British historians have illustrated how the social history of colonial Georgia played a larger role on the world stage than it has previously been given credit. Hugh Bicheno's writings on slaves expecting the British military to take them from Tybee Island to freedom in 1775 appeared in Richard Holmes' documentary on the American Revolution. Simon Schama has written upon the international consequences of the first African-American Baptist church's establishment in Georgia, a subject that he touches upon in his television series.¹

Much more could and should be available on those particular events, beyond their recent notoriety in history as portrayed on television but scholarship on colonial Georgia as a whole has lacked analysis until the early 1970s when, as historian George C. Rogers Jr. wrote, scholars finally began to pick up its scattered pieces to find its hidden importance. Here much of that work will be used to outline the new social history of the thirteenth British colony with an emphasis on its widespread significance.² Slavery and the manumission of African slaves in early Georgia, for example, came from within a heritage that predated, provided an alternative to, and would challenge the Enlightenment. The modern scholarship has shown that the colony and the state of Georgia in the eighteenth Century went through complex periods from 1735 to 1798 wherein slaves and freedmen would become issues wherein they were banned, encouraged, and treated in very different ways respectively. As Bicheno and Schama discovered, however, this story had effects far beyond just the contradiction of an Eighteenth Century society that used the rhetoric of liberty while denying an African people the hope of freedom.³

¹ Simon Schama, *Rough Crossings: Britain, the Slaves and the American Revolution* (New York: Ecco, 2006), 96-97; Hugh Bicheno, *Rebels & Redcoats: The American Revolutionary War* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), 159-60.

² Julie Anne Sweet, "The Thirteenth Colony in Perspective: Historians' Views of Early Georgia," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 85 (Fall 2001): 435-60; Robert Shig Porter II, "The Noblest Offspring: Concerning the British Origins of the Eighteenth-Century Colony of Georgia," (Masters Thesis, Armstrong Atlantic State University, 2005), 105; George C. Rogers, Jr., "The South Carolina Backcountry on the Eve of the Revolution," *Richmond County History* 6 (Summer 1974): 44.

³ White attitudes concerning slavery find discussion in Robert Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects: The Culture of Power in the South Carolina Low Country, 1740-1790* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998) and W. Robert Higgins, "The Ambivalence of Freedom: Whites, Blacks, and the Coming of the American Revolution in the South," in Higgins, ed., *The Revolutionary War in the South—Power, Conflict, and Leadership: Essays in Honor of John Richard Alden* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1979), 43-63.

This forgotten early social history has connections to the beginnings of colonial North America. On October 8, 1526, Lucas Vazquez de Ayllon established San Miguel de Guadeloupe, the first attempt at a permanent European settlement north of Mexico, in what is today Georgia. It failed within a few months due to de Ayllon's death, disease, and America's first African slave revolt, with the slaves fleeing to the Indians. In 1564, France established a colony as a refuge for their oppressed Protestant minority that included what became Georgia. Military forces of Catholic Spain ended those ambitions and established St. Augustine, what became North America's oldest continuous European settlement and the center of a chain of missions, 1568 to 1684, that were intended to remake the region's Indians into a Hispanic colonial society.⁴

With the expansion of the Protestant English mainland colonies in the Seventeenth Century, the need arose for a military buffer against this Spanish Florida, in part to stop enslaved African Americans and Indians from escaping from South Carolina. A series of armed conflicts on this border lasted longer than the famous contemporary French and Indian wars and ended the mission system.⁵ This "debatable land" continued to be military necessity on ground seeded with idealism. In 1717, Sir Robert Montgomery promoted a colony of farmer soldiers to settle in this "most delightful land of the universe." His Margravate of Azilia, however, would exist only in his imaginative writings. The later famous humanitarian Thomas Coram tried to establish a non-profit colony for resettling and rehabilitating 1,200 families of unemployed veterans and debtors along the border with Catholic France's Canada in Maine after 1713. He named his proposed colony Georgia for King George I. Two decades later, Coram, now with twenty other Trustees drawn from the British educated elite, finally succeeded in obtaining a charter for this venture. They renamed their proposed colony for the then current King George II and moved its planned location so as to defend South Carolina from Spanish Florida. Today's Georgia began with the creation of Savannah on February 12, 1733.⁶

⁴ See David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven, Ct.: Yale University Press, 1994); John T. McGrath, *The French in Early Florida: in the Eye of the Hurricane* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000); J. Leitch Wright, *Anglo-Spanish Rivalry in North America* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1971); Jerald T. Milanich, *Laboring in the Fields of the Lord: Spanish Missions in the Southeast* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006); and John E. Worth, *The Struggle for the Georgia Coast* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007).

⁵ Georgia's part of that struggle, known as the War of Jenkins's Ear (1738-1742), created the American Regiment in New England and the Middle Colonies that included Lawrence Washington, George's older brother, as an officer. The use of the word "American" in that context became the first official demarcation of the people of the colonies as separate from the British as a whole. J. Revell Carr, *Seeds of Discontent: the Deep Roots of the American Revolution, 1650-1750* (New York: Walker Co., 2008), 148-52.

⁶ Robert Montgomery, *The Most delightful Golden Islands being a proposal for the establishment of a colony in the country to the south of Carolina by Sir Robert Montgomery, Baronet, and John Barnwell*, intro. by Kenneth Coleman (Atlanta, Ga.: Cherokee Publishing, 1969), n. p.; Webb Garrison, *Oglethorpe's Folly: the Birth of Georgia* (Lakemont, Ga.: Copple House Books, 1982), 44-47; Paul S. Taylor, *Georgia Plan, 1732-1752* (Berkeley: Institute of Business and Economic Research, University of California, 1972),

The colony would famously be an effort to solve problems that were later attacked during the Enlightenment but from within the framework of the existing government and society. The Trustees used the often denounced but widely read ideas of English political theorist Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) to make a reality his *Leviathan/commonwealth/civitas* (1651), a powerful incorruptible central political state which acted like a head in controlling all operations of the greater body for the improvement and rehabilitation of the whole. Historian Geordan Hammond described this vision as a return to an imagined age of a pure primitive society wherein the inhabitants would give up selfishness, luxury, and even prosperity, to avoid any “vice” that naturally accompanied trade in order to work for the greater good. According to pre-1970s historians, only a relative handful of debtors and no criminals were sent to Georgia but historian Rodney M. Baine argues that the settlers actually included hundreds, if not thousands, of victims and former victims of England’s notorious debtor’s prisons. From thousands of miles away, the Trustees would famously try to rehabilitate these new Americans through prohibitions on rum, lawyers, estate, and local government. Self financed wealthy “Adventurers” would be allowed but the severe restrictions on land ownership encouraged a mercantile/bullionistic style economy of small free farmers growing exotic, government subsidized, crops such as silk, drugs, cotton, dyes, oil, and wine rather than the Adam Smith/Enlightenment free enterprise that had created the large profitable slave labor rice plantations in South Carolina.⁷

Slavery did fit in the Hobbesian vision but as a tool to aid society in reforming itself while potentially becoming an engine for the education, and even the eventual emancipation, of the enslaved families. The Trustees, however, discouraged slavery because they saw it as discouraging the rehabilitation of their settlers and as unfair competition to free labor. Without enslaved African labor, the tracts of only fifty acres that were assigned to each head of household appear more practical. In 1735, James Oglethorpe, the only Trustee to spend any time in the colony and its de facto chief executive until 1744, succeeded in obtaining a ban on slavery. Oglethorpe saw slaves as potential insurrectionary Spanish allies although he did use them to clear the ground and

10-13. Thomas Coram also sponsored a settlement for unemployed artisans in Nova Scotia in 1735 and started London’s Foundling Hospital in 1739. For his life’s work see Harriet Amos and Alice Meyers, *Thomas Coram: The Man Who Saved Children* (London: Foundling Museum, 2006) and Hildegard Omberg, *William Hogarth’s Portrait of Captain Coram: Studies on Hogarth’s Outlook in 1740* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1974).

⁷ Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics Volume 3: Hobbes and Civil Service* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 177, 198-99; Geordan Hammond, “Restoring Primitive Christianity: John Wesley and Georgia 1735-1737,” (Ph. D. diss., University of Manchester, 2008), 279, 281; Mark Reinberger, “Oglethorpe’s Plan of Savannah: Urban Design, Speculative Freemasonry, and Enlightenment Charity,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 81 (Winter 1997): 839-62; Rodney M. Baine, “New Perspectives on Debtors in Colonial Georgia,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 77 (Winter 1993): 4-5, 19; Betty Wood, *Slavery in Colonial Georgia, 1730-1775* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984), 10; Paul S. Taylor, “Colonizing Georgia: a Statistical Note,” *William & Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 22 (January 1965): 119.

build the first housing in Savannah. Malcontents among Georgia's settlers would begin a very public debate on repealing the ban on slavery.⁸

Rev. John Wesley, literally a pioneer in this Georgia primitivism, would come to oppose slavery while another founding Methodist, Georgia's Rev. George Whitefield, worked in 1751 to lift the ban in the colony for economic reasons. As an alternative to the pure logic of the Enlightenment, Wesley and Whitefield brought about the Great Awakening. Although both movements were racist, Whitefield practiced and widely advocated humane treatment of the enslaved as an alternative to the Enlightenment's call for the abolition of slavery. His call that all men were equal before God would inspire the anti-slavery movement among the Methodists. In later years, Georgia would also become a frontier for Separatist Baptists, a product of Whitefield's particular radical evangelism, which has since become the Southern Baptist denomination. Some of its ministers would argue against slavery during the American Revolution and later in antebellum Appalachia as a rare public opposition to African bondage in the Deep South.⁹

By the time of the arrival of the first royal governor in 1754, the Trustees and their complex idealism were gone. The province prospered and, by 1773, it had an estimated population of 18,000 White settlers, some 11,000 more than in 1760. During the period of 1753 to 1775 the number of slaves grew at an even faster rate, from 1,000 to 15,000 people.¹⁰

The royal colony of Georgia continued as a special social experiment, however. What Georgia Trustee the Earl of Egmont had termed "enthusiasts," men who were often dangerously misguided dreamers, continued to come to the colony with visions of creating unique communities that could flourish within the province's greater prosperity. Edmund Grey, for example, a "pretended Quaker," tried unsuccessfully to establish proletarian colonies within the territory of Georgia on the northwest Indian frontier in 1750-1755, and also later in the no man's land between the province's southernmost settlements and Spanish Florida. In 1767, a community of confirmed Quakers from North Carolina who followed the teachings of frontier social rebel Herman Husband established the settlement of Wrightsborough in Georgia's northwestern backcountry. Led by Joseph

⁸ Wood, *Slavery in Colonial Georgia*, 4-58; Skinner, *Hobbes and Civil Service*, 219, 222; Phinizy Spalding, *Oglethorpe in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 48-49; Taylor, *Georgia Plan*, 24-25.

⁹ Harold E. Davis, *The Fledgling Province: Social and Cultural Life in Colonial Georgia, 1733-1776* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1976) 7-32, 193-232; Carr, *Seeds of Discontent*, 148-52; John Thomas Scott, "'Next to Nothing?': Benjamin Ingham's Mission to Georgia," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 92 (Fall 2008): 287-320; Hammond, "Restoring Primitive Christianity," 58-59; Roderic Hall Pierce, "George Whitefield and His Critics," (Ph. D. diss., Princeton, 1962), 250-55. Georgia's Baptists also traditionally treated members of all races equally and the state's Baptists and Methodists spearheaded a legal offensive against slavery's worst offenses. Clarence L. Mohr, *On the Threshold of Freedom: Masters and Slaves in Civil War Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 244-45, 248.

¹⁰ William W. Abbott, *The Royal Governors of Georgia 1754-1775* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), 17-18.

Maddox, this community passed itself off as entirely pacifist, non-slave owning members of the Society of Friends when, in fact, while as much as 80 percent of its membership consisted of non-Quakers who could defend Wrightsborough from bandits and Creek Indians. William Manson, a questionable character but officially a Quaker, claimed that he wanted his Friendsborough settlement, established near Wrightsborough in 1775, to be populated with indentured servants from his native Orkney Islands of Scotland who were unemployed victims of the recent national recession and rehabilitate them from their “backsliding” ways.¹¹

The earlier communities also tried to keep something of the Trustees’ ideals such as the ban on slavery. Under their minister Johann Martin Boltzcius, the German Salzburger at Ebenezer, small farmers, ranchers, and lumbermen, continued to resist slavery from fear of being unable to compete with labor in bondage.¹² The Highland Scot community at Darien had also supported the Trustee prohibition only to later become slave owning rice planters. This community issued a powerful denouncement of slavery in 1775. The Darien statement asked how one race of men should call for liberty and freedom while enslaving other people. By contrast, the Continental Congress would even refuse to condemn the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the Declaration of Independence.

The Darien statement, beyond speculation, has left unanswered why it appeared. It did come just after a local slave revolt that resulted in the deaths of four Whites, with three others wounded, and two slaves burned to death as punishment. The following September, two slave owners and eleven other African Georgians died in another uprising. Fear of a slave revolt had likely been responsible for why the provisions of the Georgia slave code of 1765 concerning freedmen had been omitted from the code of 1770. It had encouraged the immigration of freedmen, placing a prohibition only on their voting for or serving in the colonial assembly.¹³

Colonial Governor James Wright, the largest slave owner in the colony, had approved both slave codes. As early as 1763, however, he envisioned populating the colony’s backcountry with a middle class who had few, if any, slaves. In a society similar to what had been the ambitions of the Trustees, his backcountry would be settled by

¹¹ Edward J. Cashin, *Governor Henry Ellis and the Transformation of British North America* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 63, 78; Robert S. Davis, *Quaker Records in Georgia* (Augusta, Ga.: Augusta Genealogical Society, 1986), 3-4, 15-17, 177-78, 197; Steven Jay White, “North Carolina Quakers in the Era of the American Revolution,” (Masters Thesis, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1981), 45-48.

¹² Codrina Cozma, “John Martin Boltzcius and the Early Christian Opposition to Slavery in Georgia,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 88 (Winter 2004): 257-76; George Fenwick Jones, *The Salzburger Saga: Religious Exiles and Other Germans Along the Savannah* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984), 60, 81, 103-104, 115, 134; Wood, *Slavery in Colonial Georgia*, 59-74; Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: International Publishers, 1943), 73.

¹³ Harvey H. Jackson, “‘American Slavery, American Freedom’ and the Revolution in the Lower South: The Case of Lachlan McIntosh,” *Southern Studies* 19 (1980): 81-93; Wood, *Slavery in Colonial Georgia*, 127-29, 191-92, 201; Herbert Aptheker, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (New York: International Publishers, 1940), 21, 23.

highly governable responsible property owners who could protect the colony from Indians and slave revolts as militiamen, not landless thieves or large planters. When the Ceded Lands were acquired from the Indians on the northwest Georgia frontier in 1773, land sales were restricted to tracts of from 100 to 1,000 acres per head of household and then further limited by number of persons, including slaves and indentured servants, in each family. Purchasers had to come from outside of the province and the public proclamation announcing the opening of the new territory warned that the colony's laws against vagrants would be enforced by a troop of rangers.

Wright's plans succumbed to the irresistible power of the ambitions and economics of the frontier population. Unlike the Regulators in South Carolina, however, Georgians did not have to take up arms to force the imposing of rule of law on the province's frontier. Wright endorsed the successful effort among the middle class people he termed as being of "the better sort" in his backcountry to have courts established. The governor and other Loyalists, as well as even some supporters of independence, would come to view the American Revolution in Georgia as a battle against the intrusion of the lower class Whites, such as partisan Elijah Clarke and his following as described by an anonymous source after Clarke's failed attack upon the garrison in Augusta in September 1780:

Clarke's party is said to have consisted of men, whose restless dispositions, or whose crimes prevented their living in any country where even the resemblance of government was maintained, and therefore taking themselves to the vacant lands on the frontiers; living without any control; they made inroads upon the industrious inhabitants of the back settlements, and have frequently involved the Province in wars with the Indians.¹⁴

In retaliation for this attack, all of the forts and the court house in the Ceded Lands were destroyed. At least 100 families believed to be sympathetic with the Revolution were forced into a wintery exile. Those families would later return to Georgia literally with a vengeance to expand Governor Wright's vision of a frontier for the "better sort" into literally open class warfare.¹⁵

The most significant emancipation in early Georgia came from this special environment. As with the beginnings of the Great Awakening, and so much else in the colony, it drew little notice then and there but it would have major consequences later and

¹⁴ Allen D. Candler, comp., *The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia*, 39 vols. (Atlanta: C. P. Byrd, 1907-1941), 14: 524, 527-28, 545-46; Wright to Board of Trade, December 27, 1771, in Kenneth Coleman and Milton Ready, eds., *Colonial Records of the State of Georgia* (modern publication of the unpublished Candler volumes, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1979), vol. 28, pt. ii: 379; Mary Bondurant Warren and Jack Moreland Jones, comps., *Georgia Governor and Council Journals, 1772-1773* (7 vols., Athens, Ga.: Heritage Books, 1991-2010), 4: 142; *South Carolina and American General Gazette* (Charleston), September 27, 1780.

¹⁵ J. H. Cruger to Charles Cornwallis, September 28, 1780, Cornwallis Papers, 30/11/64, p. 116, British Public Record Office; Heard Robertson and Edward J. Cashin, *Augusta and the American Revolution: Events in the Georgia Back Country, 1773-1783* (Darien, Ga.: Ashantilly Press, 1975), 48-50.

elsewhere, as told in Simon Schama's *Rough Crossings*. Matthew Moore led one of Georgia's first congregations of the then minority Separatist Baptists at Big Buckhead Creek. Later a Loyalist who died during the war, he rallied his congregation for the King's cause behind Henry Sharp, his brother-in-law and a deacon in his church. Sharp clashed with Georgia's officials almost continuously following his arrival in the colony from Virginia in the 1760s. When after 1775, the majority of the colony's population joined the Revolution, Sharp continued his personal rebellion against mainstream authority. Moore persuaded Sharp to emancipate George Liele in 1777. The congregation had been so inspired by this slave's preaching that they had ordained him. As the first black Baptist minister, Liele would mentor his childhood friend David George. The latter would become a religious leader of the Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone resettlements of former slaves. In the last days of the war, Liele would remove his own ministry to Jamaica.¹⁶

This Georgia experience would illustrate that even during the American Revolution ideas and ideals about slavery and liberty varied widely among the people in bondage. With the coming of the American Revolution, slaves often supported the king's cause as illustrated in the incident referred to by Hugh Bicheno. In January 1776, a British fleet arrived off of the coast of Georgia and eventually seized barrels of rice for the king's troops besieged in Boston. Some 200 slaves, having heard that they could be granted freedom, set out, as historian Wallace Brown wrote, with everything to gain by joining the British and nothing to lose, to reach the ships near Tybee Island. Some fifty to 100 men from various Georgia revolutionary militia companies, dressed as Indians, and with a party of actual Creek warriors, attacked the *ad hoc* settlement on Tybee Island on March 25.¹⁷

Only in legend did these Sons of Liberty and their Indian allies massacre the slave community on Tybee for wanting to be free.¹⁸ From the fleet, just six marines and one carpenter were in the slave village when the attack came. Despite claims that the White men acted with more savagery than the Indians, only three houses were destroyed, two

¹⁶ Mary Louise Clifford, *From Slavery to Freetown: Black Loyalists after the American Revolution* (Jefferson, NC: MacFarland, 1999), 17; Robert S. Davis, "The Other Side of the Coin: Georgia Baptists who Fought for the King," *Viewpoints in Georgia Baptist History*, 7 (1980): 47-58. Henry Sharp died on March 30, 1779 while leading a successful guerilla campaign against his pro-Revolution neighbors.

¹⁷ Martha Condray Searcy, "The Introduction of African Slavery into the Creek Indian Nation," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 66 (Spring 1982): 27; Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects*, 240-42; Wallace Brown, *The Good Americans: The Loyalists American Revolution* (New York: Morrow, 1969), 48-49; Robert S. Davis, "The Battle of the Riceboats: British Views of Georgia's First Battle of the American Revolution," *Proceedings and Papers of the Georgia Association of Historians* (Marietta, Ga., 1983), 111-12.

¹⁸ Peter H. Wood, "'The Facts Speak Loudly Enough': Exploring Early Southern Black History," in Catherine Clinton and Michele Gillespie, eds., *The Devil's Lane: Sex and Race in the Early South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 9-11; Bicheno, *Rebels and Redcoats*, 159; Schama, *Rough Crossings*, 85.

British marines died, and several White Loyalists were taken as prisoners. All but some one dozen of the slaves had joined Governor Wright in the safety of the British ships, on which they all subsequently left the province along with any other slaves His Majesty's soldiers had seized as booty. Historian Gordon B. Smith points out that the property of the Loyalists certainly went back to their masters and that nothing suggests that anyone else received emancipation.¹⁹

Slaves and freedmen did play major roles in the war in Georgia. George Liele and others worked as pilots, guides, and spies for both sides. On December 29, 1778, for example, Lt. Col. Archibald Campbell paid Qamino Dolly, a slave from Wright's plantations, to guide a British strike force in the defeat of the American army at Savannah. Dolly apparently remained in bondage and would be sold as confiscated Loyalist property although, after the war, he likely became the freedman Quamina Dolly who, at the time of his death in 1812, owned several slaves. Georgia became one of the first states to extensively use privately owned slave labor for improving fortifications and roads for military use as well in the state's fleet of galleys.²⁰

Several slaves and freedmen even served in the new state's military. Nathan Fry enlisted in the state's continentals as a drummer. He eventually traveled to George Washington's army with Gen. Lachlan McIntosh and served at both Valley Forge and Yorktown. As an old man, Fry would draw a federal pension. A Joseph Scipio became a private in the Fourth Georgia Continental Battalion and one Black member of the state's minutemen or militia died in 1778 at the Battle of Alligator Bridge, Florida. Wallace Dunstan, a freedman, deserted from the Second Georgia Continental Battalion. Fortune, a black drummer in that same unit, appears as wounded on a March 7, 1777 record.²¹

Despite the famous efforts by the Continental Congress to formally enlist slaves in their troops, African-Americans received no offer of freedom as an inducement to

¹⁹ Gordon B. Smith, *Morningstars of Liberty: The Revolutionary War in Georgia, 1775-1783*, 1 vol. to date, (Milledgeville, Ga.: Boyd Publishing, 2006), 1: 53-57; *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia), May 1, 1776; Jim Picuch, *Three Peoples One King: Loyalists, Indians, and Slaves in the Revolutionary South, 1775-1782* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2008), 85. For many of the documents associated with the "Battle of the Riceboats" see Warren and Jones, *Georgia Governor and Council Journals*, vol. 5.

²⁰ Smith, *Morningstars of Liberty*, 120; Alexander A. Lawrence, "General Robert Howe and the British Capture of Savannah in 1778," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 36 (December 1932): 317, and Lawrence, *Storm Over Savannah: The Story of Count d'Estaing and the Siege of the Town in 1779* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1951), 18, 43, 81; "The Sheftall Papers in the Collection of the American Jewish Historical Society," (1941), 28, 30, microfilm reel 216/1, Georgia Archives, Morrow; Michael L. Lanning, *Defenders of Liberty: African Americans in the Revolutionary War* (New York: Citadel Press, 2000), 123-25.

²¹ Revolutionary War pension claim of Nathan Fry, Ga. S 39545, *Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty Land Warrant Application Files, 1800-1900* (National Archives microfilm M904, roll 1032; *List of Black Servicemen Compiled From the War Department Collection of Revolutionary War Records* (National Archives Special List no. 36, Washington: National Archives and Records Administration, 1976), 7; Martha Condray Searcy, *The Georgia-Florida Contest in the American Revolution, 1776-1778* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1985), 144; "The Sheftall Papers," 32.

enlist. Georgia's legislature did emancipate Austin Dabney in 1786 for his service with Elijah Clarke's militia prior to his being crippled for life in battle at Augusta in 1781 or 1782. He would remain a freedman in Georgia and a Revolutionary War pensioner until his death in 1830. Other slaves would be emancipated by the state's legislative during the same period but only Dabney received his freedom for contributing to the American cause in the American Revolution.²²

Georgia's and South Carolina's state governments did offer captured slaves as bounties, to supplement and even replace promises of land and pay for military service. In a bit of irony, captured slaves of Loyalists were used as salaries for men in James Jackson's Legion, a state unit created from repatriated Loyalists in the last months of the Revolution. For guerillas and militias on both sides operating on land and sea, the enslaved became the most mobile prized property. In February 1780, for example, four American ships took almost 140 slaves at White Bluff, Georgia. Conversely, Loyalists took Black women and children as compensation for slaves they had to abandon and their provincial troops were rewarded with captured slaves. Depriving the rebels of the benefits of slave labor became an excuse for British treatment of slaves as booty. Loyalist raider Daniel McGirth had freed slaves and Indians in his band who themselves stole slaves. Depending upon politics, masters would move their slaves to safety deep within the territory controlled by their respective side.²³

The British army only reluctantly freed slaves, as discussed by Schama. Even the self-emancipated who came into the King's camps found conditions abysmal. Sometimes they chose to return to their former masters or to form maroon refugee camps in the swamps, sometimes in Florida and among the Indians. When David George tried to leave Savannah, he found himself imprisoned for one month. After his release, he and his wife worked to save enough money to obtain passage to another British port, as historian Alexander X. Byrd wrote, to join in the transformation of "slaves who desired liberty into men and women who would no longer stand slavery."²⁴

²² Peter Maslowski, "National Policy Toward the use of Black Troops in the Revolution, *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 73 (January 1972): 1-17; Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr., "Austin Dabney," in *Dictionary of Georgia Biography*, eds. Stephen Gurr and Kenneth Coleman, 2 vols. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983), 1: 239-40; Ruth Scarborough, *The Opposition to Slavery in Georgia Prior to 1860* (Nashville, Tn.: George Peabody Institute for Teachers, 1933), 135-42, 248-52.

²³ Robert Harvey, *A Few Bloody Noses: The Realities and Mythologies of the American Revolution* (New York: John Murray, 2002), 363; Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), 106-107, 110, 126-27, 132-33, 184; Piecuch, *Three Peoples*, 158-72, 325; certificate of Henry Ellison, March 26, 1783, and Peter Paris and James Martin to Lyman Hall, September 23, 1783, box 39, folders 6 and 11, Telamon Cuyler Collection, MS 1170, Hargrett Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, University of Georgia Libraries.

²⁴ Piecuch, *Three Peoples*, 162-63, 167; Alexander X. Byrd, *Captives and Voyagers: Black Migrants across the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008), 157; "Report of Police to Governor Wright," n. d., Georgia Historical Society *Collections* (1873) 3: 289-93; *South Carolina and American General Gazette* (Charleston), April 16, 1778; Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution*, 115; George H. Moore, *Historical Notes on the Employment of Negroes in the American Army of the Revolution* (New York: W. Abbatt, 1862), 184-85.

As with the White Loyalists, the slaves deserved better treatment. In September and October 1779, American and French forces combined to lay siege to Savannah. Slave labor built the fortifications and Black boatmen brought the reinforcements that saved both the town and the continuation of the war in the South for the British. Two hundred slaves were armed to protect the civilians and, overall, during the campaign some 620 African Georgians temporarily served in the King's forces and whereby some of them were wounded. Armed slaves also successfully battled Revolutionary militia in October and November 1779. They became a critical part of the defense of British held Georgia and South Carolina and at least six Africans enlisted in the German Hessian units in Savannah. In the last days of the American Revolution, armed slaves, along with Indians and White Loyalists, patrolled the lines to stop British soldiers from deserting.²⁵

Governor Wright wrote glowingly of how slaves on his eleven plantations had left their new rebel owners to return to him after his province had been restored to the Crown. In April 1780, they made a sacrifice not unlike the mythical massacre at Tybee Island. Georgia and South Carolina state militia, acting as raiders in British controlled areas, battled a company of armed slaves led by two of Wright's overseers. In the ensuing battle, according to at least one account, some sixty slaves and the two White men were killed. At Wright's plantation, his slaves fought and died for the right to be his property and against White "Liberty" men determined to sell them to new masters.²⁶

Lt. Col. Alured Clarke, the British commander in Savannah, refused to allow owners to cross his lines in search of escaped slaves and an estimated 5,000 of 15,000 slaves in Georgia in 1774 did leave the state by the end of the British evacuation on July 11, 1782. Almost all of them shared the turmoil of the miserable odyssey of their White Loyalist masters. They were not part of what has been described as "the greatest slave rebellion in North American history"; few of them reached the protection of British commander-in-chief Gen. Sir Guy Carlton in New York and eventual freedom in Nova Scotia.²⁷ Even slaves organized by the British as the "King of England's Soldiers" to

²⁵ Piecuch, *Three Peoples*, 168, 170-71; Schama, *Rough Crossings*, 100, 108; David Brian Davis, "American Slavery and the American Revolution," in Ira Berlin and Ronald Hoffman, eds., *Slavery and Freedom in the American Revolution* (Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Press, 1983), 271; Benjamin Kennedy, "Black Soldiers at the Siege of Savannah," unpublished paper in the author's possession; Cassandra Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and Their Global Quest for Liberty* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 38; Searcy, "The Introduction of African Slavery," 28-29; George Fenwick Jones, "The Black Hessians: Negroes Recruited by the Hessians in South Carolina and Other Colonies," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 83 (October 1982): 292-93.

²⁶ Newspaper abstract from May 30, 1780, and deposition of Andrew Pickens, July 3, 1798, Thomas Sumter Papers, 5VV250 and 11VV542, Lyman C. Draper Collection, Madison, Wi.; Piecuch, *Three Peoples*, 167, 226, 294; Clyde R. Ferguson, "General Andrew Pickens," (Ph. D. diss., Duke University, 1960), 93-94; Wright to George Germain, April 4, 1780, Georgia Historical Society, *Collections* (1873), 3: 281.

²⁷ Charles L. Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province 1763-1784* (Berkeley: University of California, 1943), 136-39. For the history of the maroon settlements in Florida see Joshua R. Giddings, *The Exiles of Florida or the Crimes Committed against the Maroons who fled from South Carolina and other*

defend Savannah and Augusta were left behind at the end of the war. They formed a colony in the swamps of Effingham County that, after several battles, the Georgia and South Carolina militia finally destroyed at Bear Creek in 1787.²⁸

After the war complex law suits would be filed over ownership of individual slaves. African-Americans presumed to have been the property of Loyalists, for example, were captured at Long Swamp Cherokee Indian village by General Andrew Pickens in 1782. He sold to them to pay for services of the Georgia militia in that campaign. After the war, the purchaser, Holman Freeman found himself sued by the former owner and required, after a long legal battle, to relinquish the slaves. The State of South Carolina repaid Freeman but only after passing legislation that protected Andrew Pickens and Thomas Sumter from law suits over the use of captured slaves during the Revolution. Maj. John Lindsay suffered incarceration in South Carolina 1782 for attempting to recover slaves on behalf of the State of Georgia.²⁹ Some private individuals crossed the international boundary with Florida to recover their property and, of the 6,540 slaves evacuated from East Florida when it passed to Spain, many of the more than 2,500 brought back to the United States went to Georgia.³⁰

The same economic pressures that undid the Trustees' ban on slavery proved stronger than even military need during the American Revolution and, after the war, would prove daunting for the cause of abolition anywhere in the South. The new state's future would be in land ownership and development with no restraints on land acquisition or access to labor. On the Georgia plantation of Catherine Greene in 1793, Eli Whitney

slave states seeking protection under Spanish laws (Columbus, Oh.: Follett, Foster & Co., 1858) and Y. N. Kly, ed., *The Invisible War: The African-American Anti-Slavery Resistance from the Stono Rebellion through the Seminole Wars* (Atlanta, Ga.: Clarity Press, 2006).

²⁸ Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects*, 276-79; Graham Russell Hodges, *The Black Loyalist Directory: African Americans in Exile after the American Revolution* (New York: Garland, 1996), xvi-xx; Gary B. Nash, *The Forgotten Fifth: African Americans in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 3-6, 23, 40; Piecuch, *Three Peoples*, 326; Gordon B. Smith, *History of the Georgia Militia, 1783-1861*, 4 vols. (Milledgeville, Ga.: Boyd Publishing, 2001), 3: 128-29; *Gazette of the State of Georgia* (Savannah), April 26 and May 10, 1787; William C. Nell, *The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution* (New York: Arno Press, 1966), 256-63; Julia Floyd Smith, *Slavery and Rice Culture in Low Country Georgia 1750-1860* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985), 188-89; Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution*, 174; James Jackson to ?, December 2, 1786, Telamon Cuyler Collection, Ms 1170, box 82, file 1, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia Libraries, Athens.

²⁹ Deposition of Andrew Pickens, July 3, 1798, Thomas Sumter Papers, 11VV542, Lyman C. Draper Collection, Madison, Wi.; Schama, *Rough Crossings*, 104-105; Clyde R. Ferguson, "General Andrew Pickens," (Ph. D. diss., Duke University, 1960), 300-301, 309; "Memoirs of the Early Life and Times of Judge Junius Hillyer," M76, pp. 21-24, 27, Hargrett Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, University of Georgia Libraries, Athens; interrogatory of Andrew Pickens, September 20, 1794, "Pickens, Andrew," File II Names, microfilm reel 202-56, Georgia Archives, Morrow; Robert S. Davis, comp., *The Wilkes County Papers, 1773-1833* (Easley, SC: Southern Historical Press, 1979), 176-78.

³⁰ ; Kenneth Coleman, *The American Revolution in Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1958), 183, 265-66; Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution*, 173-76.

developed a cotton gin and almost immediately, William Longstreet of Georgia powered such a gin with a steam engine. Subsequently, some of America's first textile mills would be built in Georgia. By the 1830s, one of the first, and later the world's longest railroad would be built for hauling inland cotton to Savannah. Such technological innovations would revive the South's plantation economy while also creating the ecological, economic, political, and social problems that would be the seeds for the downfall of New World generational slavery.³¹

Other changes came from this other era of change in Georgia had more in common with the Enlightenment than the writings of Thomas Hobbes. Georgians had fought a long struggle for personal independence from the days of the Trustees and their central control through the efforts of Governor Wright to affect the human terrain of the frontier. The end of the Revolution left the state devastated, with no functioning courts, a legislature that seldom met, and public policy, such as the emancipation of Austin Dabney and the famous land frauds of the era, left to whomever had popular support, or could use public indifference, to push through a private agenda. From that era, the Georgians would create a populist revolution from the bottom up that, even to the present day, distinguishes the state's political traditions from that of many other parts of the South.³²

This new "Empire State" would share with its colonial predecessor having a unique and unappreciated social history. Partial emancipation for women would be guaranteed by its early civil marriage, dowry, divorce, estate, and *femme sole* laws. Georgia's egalitarian land grant lottery system made provisions for widows, orphans, single female heads of household, and, eventually, the handicapped, children of convicts, and veterans. Beyond government action, from the 1780s to the first decade of Nineteenth Century, individuals in the new Georgia would embrace the Second Great Awakening. In the summer of 1803, for example, an interfaith revival in Smyrna in Wilkes County alone drew 5,000 to 8,000 people and received national attention. A pioneer poor school system, asylum, and prison would seek to rehabilitate society much as the old Georgia Trustees had once hoped to do. Georgia would be the first state to support an institution of higher learning in 1785 although the colony of Georgia had given 10,000 acres to Rev. George Whitefield in 1764 for the same purpose. Politicians would even come to excuse Georgia's campaigns to remove the Indian nations from its

³¹ Robert S. Davis, "The First Golden Age of Georgia Industry, 1828-1860," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 72 (Winter 1988): 699-711. For Georgia and land see Leslie Hall, *Land and Allegiance in Revolutionary Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001).

³² George R. Lampaugh, "Farewell to the Revolution: Georgia in 1785," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 56 (Fall 1972): 387-402; Robert S. Davis, "Nathaniel Pendleton and the Attempt to Publish the First Digest of Georgia Laws," *Proceedings and Papers of the Georgia Association of Historians* 9 (1988): 155-60. For a discussion of authority and society in colonial Georgia see Andrew C. Lannen, "Liberty and Authority in Colonial Georgia, 1717-1776," (Ph. D. diss., Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 2002) and Robert S. Davis, "A Frontier for Pioneer Revolutionaries: John Dooly and the Beginnings of Popular Democracy in Original Wilkes County," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 90 (Fall 2006): 315-49.

official borders as wrestling away from large slave-owning planters of questionable Indian descent the territory that they argued should be given to the state's small farmers.³³

Accommodation with manumission might have been a part of those ideals, as it would be in Virginia; the state of Georgia did ban the importation of slaves in 1793 for sale to go into effect in 1798, a decade before the United States Congress finally forbade the importation of African slaves. The power of enslaved labor became economically, socially, and politically overwhelming in the new state as to all but prohibit the freeing of and the freed slaves. Freedmen threatened to diminish the value of slaves as property and to limit a planter's ability to lease out skilled workers to compete against free labor, Black and White. Historian Robert Olwell believes that the 1,800 freedmen in the South Carolina 1790 census were self liberated. Statistics for Georgia hardly suggests any such similar mass emancipation except in frontier Wilkes County when, even then, only 180 freedmen were found to 7,268 slaves.³⁴ Between 1800 and 1850, the population of free persons of color in the state only increased from 1,919 to 2,931 persons while the total of slaves went from 59,600 to 381,682. The state constitution of 1798 would forbid the legislature from freeing any other slave, such as Austin Dabney, without the owner's consent and a state law in 1801, following a wave of emancipations in and out of Georgia, outlawed manumissions even by owners. By 1860, Georgia had among the most repressive laws against freedmen and slaves in America. Freeing individuals became so real a perceived threat to the Cotton Kingdom that, almost twenty years after the unreported death of the long forgotten Austin Dabney, former Governor George R. Gilmer would write an elaborate excuse for the act of the legislature that emancipated that crippled soldier of the American Revolution.³⁵

This first "primitive," as in original, social history of Georgia has too often either largely been forgotten, ignored, or trivialized as quaint for its prohibitions on

³³ Robert S. Davis, *Cotton Fire and Dreams: The Robert Findlay Iron Works and Heavy Industry in Macon, Georgia, 1839-1912* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1998), 36; William Few to Katherine Few, August 4, 1803, Box 1, folder 9, William and Katherine Nicholson Few Papers, MS 3245 Hargrett Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, University of Georgia Libraries, Athens; "Revival of Religion," *American Citizen* (New York), October 12, 1803; warrant for George Whitefield, December 18, 1764, file 35, box 12, Telamon Cuyler Collection, MS 1177, Hargrett Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, University of Georgia Libraries, Athens; Robert S. Davis, "State v. George Tassel: States' Rights and the Cherokee Court Cass, 1827-1830," *Journal of Southern Legal History* 12 (January 2004): 46, 65-66. The issue of women's rights in Georgia also had origins in colonial times. Thomas Coram had opposed the Trustees' restriction on daughters being able to inherit from their fathers. Gillian Wagner, *Thomas Coram, Gent: 1668-1751* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2004), 2, 97-99.

³⁴ Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects*, 276; *Return of the Whole Number of Persons Within the Several Districts of the United States* (Philadelphia: Joseph Gales, 1791), 54; *Return of the Whole Number of Persons Within the Several Districts of the United States* (Washington: Wm. Duane & Son, 1801), 21.

³⁵ *The Seventh Census of the United States 1850* (Washington: Robert Armstrong, 1853), 365; Mohr, *On the Threshold of Freedom*, 14-16, 45-47; Thomas, "Austin Dabney," 1: 239-40. For more on the limitations placed on freedmen and the issue of race in early Georgia see Ira Berlin, *Slaves without Masters: the Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York: New Press, 1992) and Timothy J. Lockley, *Lines in the Sand: Race and Class in Lowcountry Georgia, 1750-1860* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001).

slavery, rum, land ownership, lawyers, and slavery. Two centuries later a new revolution in scholarship produced views of colonial Georgia which, as popularized by such works as those of Bicheno, Holmes, and Schama, explore its extraordinary consequences. Because of that work, the beginnings of the thirteenth colony, including its history with slavery and freedom, should never again be seen as a series of unrelated and insignificant antiquarian curiosities.